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Prefix to Foreign Policy

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

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The remarks which I am about to deliver and those which I shall deliver in subsequent addresses were prepared before the recent serious incidents in Latin America, the Middle East and North Africa broke upon the world. These incidents, Mr. President, despite the shameful riots and mob assaults upon innocent persons which they have entailed, may have served one purpose. They may have shattered the dangerous illusion that all is right with foreign policy, that all we need to do is more of what we are doing, and that, in time, the troubles of the world and evils of communism will melt away and peace will come to stay.

I have not altered my remarks as a result of these incidents, except in one respect, which I shall mention in a moment. I have not done so because they were prepared, even before these incidents took place, in the conviction that all was not right with policy and that, to make it right, to build a durable peace, we needed to do many things differently than we are now doing.

I am sure that there will be regrets at some of the things I am about to say. Some will think that the time is not right to say them, particularly in the light of recent events.

I might have altered my remarks to meet these objections. I have had time to do so. I have not done so. I have not done so, Mr. President, because after the incidents recede into the past, the basic problems will remain. I have not done so because I believe that if there is to be a chance for freedom in a world at peace, it lies in coming to grips with the international realities
which confront us. If I did not define these realities as I see them, I would be doing an injustice to the intelligence of the Senate and an injustice to my own conscience.

These remarks may add little to the solution of the difficulties of foreign policy at this critical time. If they are to add anything, however, they must be, not expedient remarks, but honest remarks.

I said that I had not altered these remarks, except in one respect. That one respect is a deletion of what I had intended to say on Algeria. I have altered this section because what is happening in France is more than an incident. It is the trial of the soul of a great free nation. It is an inner struggle with which only the French people themselves can come to grips. No words from outside at this time, however well intended, however sincerely spoken out of friendship for France can aid in that struggle. They can only be seized upon by the enemies of France and liberty to make the struggle more difficult.

I proceed, now, Mr. President, to the first of four addresses which I propose to deliver in the Senate within the next ten days.
Speech of Senator Mike Mansfield (D., Montana)
For Release Friday P.M.'s, May 16, 1958

TOWARDS A DURABLE PEACE

I. The Pressure Points of Danger

Mr. President:

Weeks and months have passed in the search for the road to the summit. What began as a quest for greater international stability threatens at all times to degenerate into a free-for-all, a verbal free-for-all, if not worse. Letters go back and forth across the ocean. Words fly thick and fast. The polite language of diplomacy gives way to stronger stuff. The chips appear on national shoulders. One epithet leads to another and - if I may make light of a grave matter - the olive branches tend to become shillelaghs.

All this, Mr. President, in the name of peace. All this, Mr. President, occurs not at the summit where the stress of dealing with great international issues might excuse momentary lapses on the part of the world's leaders. It occurs at the mere idea of the summit.

Let me make clear at the outset that I have no special attachment to summit conferences. On the contrary I have had and have expressed serious doubts as to the advisability of a meeting of heads of states in present circumstances. Because I have had these doubts, I have refrained from discussing foreign policy on
the floor of the Senate for the better part of this session. It seemed to me appropriate to remain silent as long as a meeting which could advance the cause of peace might be imminent.

Perhaps some good will still come of the diplomatic fencing that is now in process. I hope so. I hope the beating of the bushes at the base will open a clear way to a fruitful summit. In the light of events of the past few weeks, however, it seems to me that no useful purpose is served by remaining silent any longer.

For, to doubt the utility of a particular international meeting in a particular set of circumstances, as I have doubted it, is not to question the desirability of peace. Even more, it is not to ignore the urgency - the enormous urgency of a more durable peace, for this country and for the world.

That, I fear, is precisely what is being ignored, in the present groping for the summit. We are losing sight of the ends of negotiation in the haggling over the forms of negotiation.

A decent respect for the opinion of mankind demands something more than a mere angling for hollow propaganda victories at this critical hour. It demands something more than the sorry spectacle of the political leaders of the world wrangling in public over the important but secondary questions of when to meet, where to meet and whom to meet.

These questions are not what lies at the root of the anxieties of this country and of the world. The burning question in the
hearts of decent men and women everywhere is not how the nations meet but can the nations meet on any reasonable and honorable grounds in an effort to pull the world from the edge of the disaster on which it now walks.

Let there be no mistake about the urgency of this question. In this country our lives may go on in an unruffled fashion. The day-to-day problems may still take priority in our thoughts. I assume that it is the same with the Russians, the Europeans, the Asians. We may find - as may they - a kind of dubious comfort in the belief that the new weapons of war are so deadly that they have terrified the world into a permanent, if somewhat quivering peace.

That comfort, Mr. President, if any feel it, is illusory. This so-called peace of mutual terror, of mutual deterrence is no peace at all. It is not even a pause in the headlong rush into hideous destruction. Under the seeming calm of this peace, the pressures of conflict continue to accumulate. The weapons of mass annihilation pile up and grow more deadly. The countdowns quicken. A slip here and there, a momentary touch of madness somewhere and the rain of death will begin.

It is not only the Russians or ourselves who rest fingers on the hair-triggers of ultimate war. Unstable political situations exist throughout the world and they, too, can provide the spark. These situations, in Europe, in the Middle East, in the Far East are like fused A-Bombs which, I understand, are used to detonate H-Bombs.
If one of these smaller explosive situations gives way, it may well fire the massive instability of Soviet-American relations.

These considerations prompt me to address the Senate today. I present my remarks and the three additional speeches which I propose to make during the next few days in a spirit of responsible Democratic cooperation with a Republican Administration. I present them in the hope of making some contribution, however limited, to the efforts of the Senate, the President and the Secretary of State to deal with the enormous problems of the safety of the nation and the peace of mankind.

I present them now because the chance to pursue constructive action for peace will not last forever. I present them now because I believe that the world is living on borrowed time when it lives by mutual terror.

I have already noted, Mr. President, that the fundamental issue is not where, when and with whom to meet. The basic problem is to seek to reduce the threat of destruction which confronts not us alone, not the Russians alone, but the whole of civilization; in truth, the whole of the human species.

The question for which we must seek an affirmative answer is whether or not it is possible to build a way of international life in this second half of the 20th Century other than this reckless dance of cold war in the name of peace, ever-closer to the brink of extinction. Can we begin to find that way now? In short, can we replace the unstable deterrence of mutual terror with a more durable order?
I do not know, Mr. President, whether we shall be able to bring about a transition to a more stable world. I do know, however, that the transition will not materialize out of pious or propagandistic generalities on peace. It will not be built unless the will to peace is as determined in the statesmen of the world as the hope for peace is real in the hearts of the people of the world. It will not be built unless there is an open and honest appraisal of the pressure-points of danger, the pressure-points at which peace may give way. It will not develop unless there is action, practical action, to strengthen international stability at these points.

What I am trying to express to the Senate is that there is, in my opinion, an urgent necessity for a step back from the "awful abyss" into which the Secretary of State gazed with such justified horror a short time ago. What I am trying to suggest is that there may be ways to reduce the accumulating pressures for conflict at points where it seethes in volcanic proportions. What I am trying to say is that we must seek these ways now and we must seek them in all good faith.

One of the pressure points, Mr. President - perhaps the most dangerous, I do not feel adequately informed to discuss at this time. I refer to the possibility of an accidental war between this country and the Soviet Union. This is a highly technical question and most of the information which is needed to try to answer it is either secret or unknown. Permit me, however, to make only this brief observation on the matter.
A short time ago the Soviet delegate at the United Nations advanced and then withdrew a resolution against the United States. He contended that the practices of the Strategic Air Command in the Arctic regions could touch off an accidental war at any time.

These practices, as the Senate knows, are designed to keep our retaliatory forces at instant readiness to meet an aggression. The World was subsequently given assurances by President Eisenhower that the practices were fool-proof against accident. I accept those assurances, knowing as I do, something of the splendid calibre of men and women who staff the Strategic Air Command.

I must ask, however, as I am sure others must ask, what assurances are there that similar practices of the Russians are also fool-proof? I must ask, what assurances are there that these practices even if they are fool-proof on both sides today will be fool-proof tomorrow? Will they remain fool-proof as each step forward in the development of missiles reduces the time available to rectify the human and mechanical errors which are inevitable in any massive system of military operations?

The answer, Mr. President, is that there are no assurances and there can be no assurances without the growth of a more stable international situation. It will matter little to a world reduced to smoldering ashes and radioactive rubble that it was a Russian rather than an American error which brought civilization to ruin.
The Russians have rejected the concept of international inspection of the Arctic region which presumably would have reduced this danger of accidental war. That is regrettable but it is no excuse for throwing up our hands in despair or disgust. For if it is in their interest as well as ours - and I must assume that it is - to avoid an accidental war then we must continue to seek ways to avoid it, as must they.

That is all I wish to say at this time, Mr. President, on the question of accidental war between the Soviet Union and the United States although, as I have already noted, it is one of the major sources of danger which confronts us and the rest of the world. I hope that the distinguished Members of the Disarmament Subcommittee, the Space Committee and the Atomic Energy Committee - members of both parties - will illuminate this matter for the Senate in the weeks ahead.

Let me turn now to other pressure-points of potential conflict - to the principal unstable political structures in the world. Let me outline the situations which I shall be discussing in addresses during the next few days.

In these situations, Mr. President, in Europe, in the Middle East, the Far East, the danger of war, the ultimate war may not be apparent or imminent but it is nevertheless real. The need to strengthen stability in these areas, the need to reduce the likelihood of a miscalculation or an act of compulsive madness is imperative.
At these pressure-points, Mr. President, the danger arises not merely from the tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union. It arises equally and perhaps, even more, from the instability that is inherent in these regions themselves. It is not inconceivable at these points that in the manner of A-Bombs setting off H-Bombs the Russians and ourselves may become involved in a conflict, set off by hands other than our own.

Let me take first, Mr. President, the instability of Europe. It seems to me a dangerous misreading of history to assume as some of our statements of policy appear to assume that the only threat to peace in that region lies in an aggression by Soviet military power. By the same token, it is equally erroneous for the Russians to assume as they have apparently chosen to assume that the principal threat to the Soviet Union lies in the presence of United States military power on the continent of Europe.

This confrontation of the two principal military powers of the world is indubitably a danger, but is it the only danger? In truth, is it the principal danger? It is well to remember that Soviet military power did not move westwards in Europe nor United States military power eastwards across the Atlantic until Europe itself - west and east - had set Europe aflame. This experience of World War II constrains upon us, as it does upon the Russians, the greatest caution in assuming that the answer to Europe's problems is merely the withdrawal of the military power of one or the other or both.
There are other factors which underlie the instability of Europe. It may be in these factors rather than in the Soviet or American presence on the continent that the seeds of eventual conflict are implanted. Ironically, it may even be the presence of these outside forces which so far has prevented the seeds from growing.

At this time, Mr. President, I wish only to suggest some of these other factors for I shall be discussing them at greater length in subsequent remarks. None of these factors, as the Senate knows, is more significant than the division of Germany. The continued separation of what is one great nation, into two, shall threaten the peace of Europe as long as it lasts. Let me say with equal emphasis, however - and this is an aspect of the problem that is often overlooked - the answer to the threat posed by division is not unification at any price and in any circumstances. The answer to the problem is German unification in peace and for peace. Unless this qualification is added, German unification will be just as much a threat to European stability as German division. Let us face honestly the fact that twice we have had German unification and twice it has taken turns which destroyed the peace of Germany, Europe and the peace of the world.

The problem of German unification is related to another basic factor underlying the danger of stability in Europe. It is inseparable from the problem of maintaining firm unity in the Western European countries and close cooperation among the free
nations of the West. The best hope of a Germany unified in peace and for peace lies in a Germany wedded to a Western Europe integrated in peace and for peace. For, it was largely the divisiveness and the insane rivalries of this region, rather than the actions of Russia or the United States, which twice in the lifetime of most of us sanctioned attempts at the suicide of Western civilization.

The states of western Europe are now embarked upon the long and painful journey to find in common what is now denied to each alone. They are seeking a new system of economic and social progress in peace and in freedom, beyond the concept of the national state, which will serve all the people of Western Europe. It has taken years of strife and agony, the lives of millions, to bring Western Europe to this point. Those unlived lives, those lost years, sacrificed in keeping apart what is one basic culture, can never be reclaimed. They are a price paid for the failure of European leadership in the past to face the realities of the 20th Century. They are a tribute exacted for the divisive fear and short-sighted national selfishness of generations of Europeans.

What is important now for Western Europeans is not to look back in pity or in anger, or in fond but empty dreams of a former national grandeur. What is important is that they look ahead to the new and integrated Europe which is building, to the Europe of the Coal and Steel Community, to the Europe of Euratom, to the Europe of the Common Market, to the Europe of the Defense Community.
That process must go on; it must not falter for, if it does, the Europeans will lose the promise of tomorrow. They will scuttle back to the tattered pattern of national rivalry and division. Only there can be no going back now for Europe and the World, to anything except chaos and the final act of disaster.

If there are sources of instability in Europe in the unsolved problems of German unification and in the still incomplete and untried integration of the Western nations, others of equal importance exist in Eastern Europe. The instability in the latter area, Mr. President, stems from the denial of a secure national existence to the principal peoples of that region, to the unfulfilled desire which exists among them for personal freedom and for the dignity of human equality.

The indictment against the Russians on this score, Mr. President, is not that they made these problems. The problems, for the most part, were in existence long before the Soviet Union moved to dominance in Eastern Europe. The indictment against the Russians, Mr. President, is that they have denied the promise of progress on these problems which existed at the end of World War II. The indictment against the Russians is that in dealing with the people of countries like Poland, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, and Czechoslovakia, for whatever their reasons, they have even turned back the clock.
The Russians may not wish to discuss Eastern Europe in international conferences. Nevertheless, the problems are there. Until a substantial beginning is made in their solution, instability will continue to plague that region. It will do so not because we inspire it as the Russians may choose to think but because the urge to a secure national existence, to personal freedom, to equal human dignity that pounds in the breasts of men cannot be stilled. So long as the people of Eastern Europe find an inadequate outlet in progress towards these ends, the peace of Russia, Europe and the world remains in danger.

I turn from Europe now, Mr. President, to a second major pressure-point of potential conflict, to the Middle East. Let me say that here, too, I disagree with the premise of this Administration that the primary threat to peace is the penetration of the region by Russia. And I certainly disagree with what is the Soviet premise that the primary threat to peace is western imperialism, to which we are invariably linked by Russian propaganda.

True, the Soviet Union is engaged in the most dangerous kind of international mischief in the Middle East, aimed at the Western nations. True, we have direct and indirect interests in the region and Western Europe has an economic stake which borders on the desperate. In these circumstances, there is always the possibility of a premeditated clash between the two in the Middle East. I venture to suggest, however, that this possibility is not the major
danger of war in that region. I venture to suggest that a greater danger lies in the acute instability within the region itself. If inner-generated tensions snap the thin thread of stability which now exists in the Middle East, the consequences, in the manner of A-Bombs firing H-Bombs, may be to set aflame the rest of the world, in a war not necessarily sought by the Russians and certainly not by ourselves.

I venture to suggest, further, that it is not the present policies of the Russians, of the Western European nations, or ourselves which are at the base of these tensions. The unscrupulousness of Soviet policy; the inadequacies of western policies certainly may play a part in keeping alive these tensions. More fundamentally, however, the base of Middle Eastern instability is the sudden release, the release in explosive proportions and, not infrequently irrational patterns, of the long-repressed and essential forces of change within the area itself, the release of these forces by the levers of nationalism and the promise of modern progress which it contains. Those who rave and rant against the Western nations over the grievances of the past will do well to remember that there is another side to the story. They will do well to remember that if, in the past, exploitation came out of the West so, too, was it from the West that the levers of essential change were extended to the Middle East.
The danger, Mr. President, the fundamental danger to peace in the Middle East today is the uncertainty, the unpredictability of the direction of change. This change can flow into the peaceful political, economic and social progress of all the people of the Middle East. It can readily be diverted, however, by the techniques of terrorism, conspiracy, propaganda, and militarism into destructive channels. The still unanswered question, Mr. President, is whether it will be possible to dig deeper the channels which lead away from destructive conflict towards peaceful progress in the Middle East. That is a problem primarily for the peoples of the Middle East. What the Russians do, what the Europeans do, what all nations do, however, will have a great influence on the answer.

I turn, finally, in these remarks today, Mr. President, to the pressure-points of danger in the Far East. As in the other regions I have been discussing, the factor of tension between the United States and the Soviet Union is present in the Far Eastern situation. Again, however, it may not be the decisive factor in casting the die for peace or war. Again, factors within the area may be more significant.

The principal points of danger in the Far East at this time lies in the divided countries of Viet Nam and Korea - the latter particularly - and in the unsettled status of Formosa. War may begin at any of these points, despite an honest desire, if such might exist, on the part of the Soviet Union as well as this country to avoid it.
Once begun it may well spread to engulf the entire region and the world. World War II commenced in the Far East, in Manchuria. What happened once is even more likely to happen again, given the infinitely more complex and interrelated globe on which we now live. It can happen again unless we and the Russians, unless the people of the Far East most of all, come to grips with realities in that region and unless this is done soon.

I have said it before and I say it again. What exists now in the Far East - in Korea, Viet Nam and Formosa - is no peace at all. Any attempt to so describe it is to delude the deepest hopes of the people of this country. It is to make a political mockery of the sacrifices in lives and money which they have made in that region in World War II and in the Korean conflict, in all the years since 1941.

What exists in the Far East is a truce, a tenuous truce, maintained in large part by a 24-hour American military alert along the coast of Asia and by expenditures which even now total well over a billion dollars annually in aid to nations in that region. This effort, this truce, holds an uncertain lid on three highly volatile situations. It conceals the pressures in Viet Nam and Korea - the inner pressures - for unity. It conceals the unsettled status of Formosa, the unfinished business of World War II and the civil war in China. Until these realities are faced, until they begin to yield to rational solution, it is misleading and dangerously irresponsible to talk of peace in the Far East.
I shall be going into these three pressure-points of danger - Europe, the Middle East and the Far East - in detail during the next few days. Let me conclude, today, by emphasizing that we cannot know with certainty whether any policies pursued by this nation will succeed in strengthening the uncertain grip of humanity on civilized existence. What we can know, with almost certain assurance, is that unless this grip is made stronger, unless the danger of war, war by drift or by the design of madness, is reduced - in a day, a week, a year or five - this civilized existence will slip from the fingers of mankind.

In these circumstances, we cannot take refuge in the smug assumption that we are doing all that can be done to preserve peace. We cannot content ourselves with pointing a finger of scorn at others, however much it may relieve our feelings. Regardless of what others may do, we must search for a way to transform this blind lull of mutual terror into a more durable peace. That is a responsibility which we owe to the people we represent; it is a responsibility we owe to mankind. At this moment in time it is a responsibility which we owe to life itself.